

# Viva La Comida 2013 - Fabulous Food All Around

SEPTEMBER 20, 2013

Friday night I had the pleasure of attending Viva La Comida, a food and cultural festival that takes place on 82nd Street in Jackson Heights, Queens. It's in its second year now, and going strong. They had more space this year compared to last, and more food vendors, too. My friend Jeff Orlick is the organizer of the food side of things, and has done an excellent job getting great food vendors to participate. I ate some extremely delicious things—two dishes that stood out were from a new vendor and a returning vendor.



It was great to see food that represents so many different parts of the world—El Salvador, Ireland, The Phillipines, India, Tibet, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. I also understand there was Ecuadorian, Dominican, and Italian food represented too. Additionally, I picked up

a *pandebono* (Colombian) from Las Delicias En Pandebono (they make THE BEST *pandebono* in Queens) a cup of fresh strawberry-tangerine-carrot juice from 82 Market, and a glass of *horchata* from Taqueria Coatzingo, all local businesses on 82nd Street.

I was also happy to hang out and share food with my friend Dayna, talented animator and food fan (so good to see friends and fellow food writers Sue, Bradley, Anne, and Joe during the evening, too!). We got there early, which was great for getting food relatively quickly. First dish we tried was two *pupusas* from El Oolmega, a truck based at the Red Hook Ballfields, home to amazing, authentic global food. They've been in business for 23 years, and their *pupusas* were one of the highlights for me.



We got two *pupusas*, one stuffed with pork and cheese and one stuffed with *loroco* and cheese. [Loroco](#) is a flower from Central America and used commonly in *pupusas*. It was delicious! They were topped with *curtido* (a traditional tangy cabbage condiment) and we got the optional pickled jalapeños on it, then sprinkled a bit of hot sauce and crema over everything. I couldn't get over how fresh and delicious it all was—the masa yielded easily to the fork, with flavorful fillings. Definitely a high point of the evening.



My other favorite food of the night was the *arepa con queso* from Jackson Height's own Arepa Lady crew. These *arepas* are excellent and have quite the glowing reputation. I especially love these smaller, thick, soft, and cheesy *arepas*, that are topped with more cheese. They are a little sweet, too, so it ends up being this wonderful mix of sweet and savory, one of my favorite meta flavor combos. Gorgeous looking thing, too.

I stood in line for about 45 minutes for this *arepa* and it was totally worth it. I took a little Vine of her cooking the *arepas* while I stood in line.

Another very tasty dish we tried was the curry fries from the Chipper Truck. This truck is based in the Bronx and serves Irish food. They are proud of how thick their curry sauce is (some places apparently water theirs down), and I agree that it was a really nice element of these enhanced fries. The sauce really stuck to the fries, which were good on their own, and the combo was really fantastic—well-cooked crinkle fries topped with a silky, savory sauce with a distinct curry flavor.



We weren't sure at first if we could eat them all but we pretty much polished them off while discussing the latest episode of Breaking Bad. OMG all around.

To counteract this carbastic moment, we ate some pork barbecue sticks from Ray's Famous Barbecue, a Filipino barbecue cart. The pork was very tasty, and slightly sweet. I loved watching them cook it on the grill so that the pork slightly caramelized (their sauce no doubt helped with that).



I was so glad to have found that source of fresh juice I mentioned above. I could not resist the call of the strawberry-mandarin (I also tasted a bit of carrot in there). When I went to pay for it, I noticed that they had a whole fresh juice system set up in there at the store, and from the presence of foam on the surface of the juice I bought, it must have been made recently.



The display was very colorful, which caught my eye at first.



Speaking of colorful, I loved this display of various gelatin desserts.



And nearby was the trumpet-percussion duo of Sunny Side Social. They were pretty good!



I also passed these baked goods and wish I had stopped and bought some. They really looked good. The guava one in the foreground looks particularly tasty.



The event was well-attended, for sure.



Here is a little Vine of the foot traffic that evening, before it got dark.

Congratulations to all the organizers for putting on a terrific event! I agree with my friend Sue—it really is one of the best food festivals in New York City. I look forward to experience its continued success in years to come!